



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release Upon Receipt JAN 19 1955

ANNOUNCE ALASKA COMMERCIAL FISHING REGULATIONS FOR 1955

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay today issued changes in the regulations for the protection of the commercial fisheries of Alaska for 1955. The amended regulations will become effective in 30 days.

The revised regulations do not change present regulations governing operation of set nets. This is because an amendment to the Alaska Fishery law, now pending in Congress, is intended to clarify the status of set nets.

A Federal Court decision in Alaska last summer held that set nets are fixed gear. The Fish and Wildlife Service historically has classified them as movable gear. One effect of the Court decision was to subject set nets to a statutory requirement which specifies that units of fixed gear must not be less than 1,800 feet apart, laterally. As movable gear, set nets in the past have been operated from 300 to 600 feet apart.

When the Fish and Wildlife Service reported that an 1,800 foot minimum interval between set nets is not considered essential to conservation requirements, and that imposition of the drastic limitation would impose hardships on small fishermen, the Department ordered action on new set net regulations suspended pending action by Congress. If this new legislation, which the Department will support, is enacted prior to the 1955 fishing season, no immediate change in the set net regulation will be necessary.

The 2-year pink salmon rehabilitation program involving severe curtailment of the catch in southeastern Alaska and complete closure in Prince William Sound, which was launched in 1954, will continue in 1955. The Fish and Wildlife Service reports that the resulting escapements were much better last year than in 1952, the parent year of the two-year-cycle pinks. If survival is normal, an increase in the size of the runs should occur in 1956.

In the Kodiak and Cook Inlet areas where the king crab fishery is relatively new, protection during the molting and soft-shell periods is necessary to prevent needless destruction of female and small male crabs. Therefore, a closed season on king crabs from January 1 to May 31 was imposed in the Cook Inlet area, and closures during soft-shell stages will be imposed in the Kodiak area as determined by direct observation.

Biological data obtained in 1953 indicated that there was a relatively strong incoming year class in the herring populations in southeastern Alaska. This permits the catch quota for 1955 to be increased to 100,000 barrels.

Office
Dec 1/19/53

Other changes are as follows:

In Bristol Bay the size of the fishing districts has been adjusted, reducing the Egegik district by about four miles, and increasing the Kvichak-Naknek district by the same distance.

Personal-use fishing restrictions have been relaxed in the Nushagak district to permit fishing at Snag Point, and to allow fishing throughout the district each Wednesday, when commercial fishing is prohibited.

In the Alaska Peninsula area the closing date has been changed from July 31 to August 5 in the southwestern and southcentral districts where improved pink salmon runs are anticipated. A limited set net fishery will be allowed in the southeastern district during the red salmon season, prior to July 5. To compensate in part for these relaxations, the weekly closed period has been lengthened from 60 to 72 hours prior to July 5.

In the Kodiak area, red salmon runs have not been good for some time and the June openings in these districts have been eliminated. The area will open uniformly on July 11 for pink salmon, continuing until August 13, with a one-week closure from July 23 to August 1. As in 1954, the closure of a week may be rescinded if the runs are strong.

In the Cook Inlet area, the usual odd-year closing dates of August 4 and August 8 are specified.

The Cook Inlet red salmon pack in 1950 reached a total of 207,000 cases, which is far above normal, but the escapements were poor and apparently this large pack was made partly at the expense of the brood stock. The 1955 run, which will be derived from the 1950 escapement, will be correspondingly smaller. Therefore, if the Alaska Fishery Law is amended prior to the opening season, some curtailment of the number of fishing days may be necessary.

Changes have been made in the Chignik, Prince William Sound, and Copper River areas, and also in the Yakutat area and the various gill net fisheries of southeastern Alaska.

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